

ABSTRACT

This report documents the results and conclusions of a Phase II Archaeological Evaluations of the Jackson-Griffith House Site (7-NC-A84) located at the intersection of Old Lancaster Pike, Valley Road, and S.R. 41/Lancaster Pike in Hockessin, New Castle County, DE. The undertaking that initiated this investigation involves planned safety improvements to the intersection by the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). As part of federal environmental requirements associated with these improvements, the engineering firm of Whitman, Requardt and Associates, LLP (WRA) hired the Cultural Resources Group of Kise Straw and Kolodner (KSK) to complete this investigation on behalf of DelDOT. Fieldwork was completed in June 2002.

The Jackson-Griffith House Site is a historic property that dates to the mid-nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries. Named after the house owners during its most significant period of occupation, this site served as a private dwelling, store, and during the Griffith tenure as Hockessin's first official post office. Originally consisting of the house and an associated farm outbuilding complex, all structures on the site were demolished in the mid-1950s for the construction of S.R. 41 and the property was subsequently transformed into the current rest area/public park.

Previous Phase I testing of proposed roadway improvement related impact areas resulted in the identification of portions of the house foundations and numerous artifacts associated with the occupation of the site during the historic period, as well as a small quantity of prehistoric lithic materials. Phase II studies of the site sought to better define the vertical and horizontal disposition of associated artifact deposits, to identify any attendant sub-surface features, to recover a more completely representational sample of cultural materials, and to evaluate the site's potential eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Testing conducted as part of the present investigation included the execution of 10 three foot by three foot (one by one meter) square excavation units as well as the mechanical stripping of sections of former yard areas to determine the presence or absence of associated features.

Completion of the testing regimen resulted in the exposure and excavation of the intact house foundations and basement, the recovery of some 1058 historic and prehistoric artifacts, and in the discovery of a single apparently intact Native American feature. Fieldwork further documented the extent to which the site had been impacted by post-demolition landscaping and roadway construction activities. Historic artifacts from the site were contained almost exclusively within portions of the site surrounding the house foundations, and derived from a series of highly mixed/re-worked fill strata associated with the destruction of the house and the creation of the current park. Though consisting largely of construction-related debris, this assemblage also contained a number of glass, ceramic, and metal domestic artifact fragments, most of which were temporally non-diagnostic in nature. In addition, a total of four utilitarian historic features were identified, including portions of a system of field drains, effluent pipelines, and a single probable trash pit.

Prehistoric materials from the site include 66 lithic artifacts (primarily quartz debitage) and 18 sherds of grit-tempered pottery, and are associated with a plow-impacted Native American occupation situated immediately adjacent to the former Jackson-Griffith house. Diagnostics from this assemblage were represented by a single weakly side-notched chert projectile point recovered from disturbed contexts and a single sherd of possible incised Minguannan pottery associated with the identified sub-surface feature. Analysis of these artifacts suggests that the prehistoric occupation most likely dates to the Woodland II Culture Period, although the presence of the notched point may point to the presence of an additional Archaic/Woodland I component. Testing of the feature revealed it to consist of a series of three closely spaced, shallow pits of unspecific function. Artifacts found within the feature fill included a handful of

debitage, the above sherd of incised pottery, and minute quantities of charcoal and possible calcined bone. No further analysis of the feature soils or its charcoal and faunal contents was performed in conjunction with this investigation.

Based on these results KSK determined that the site has been severely impacted by demolition and roadway construction activities and that little in the way of intact archaeological resources remain preserved below the surface of the current rest area/park. Given this level of disturbance, in association with the limited information contained in the recovered historic and prehistoric sub-assemblages KSK believes that no portion of the site is eligible for listing in the Nation Register, and recommends that no additional (i.e., Phase III Data Recovery) archaeological investigations be required prior to the initiation of planned intersection improvements.